

Alaska Trauma Registry Calendar February 2000

State of Alaska
Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Public Health
Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

Helmet Use for Skiers and Snowboarders

As millions of enthusiasts hit the slopes this season, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is urging skiers and snowboarders to wear helmets to help prevent head injuries from falls and collisions. A CPSC study released last year as part of the agency's ongoing work to reduce head injuries, concluded that helmet use could prevent or reduce the severity of head injuries to both children and adults.

In 1998, there were more than 16,000 head injuries associated with skiing and snowboarding in the U.S. CPSC estimates that each year more than 7,000 head injuries could be prevented or reduced in severity with helmet use.

"These injuries can be devastating," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown, "Simply strapping on a helmet before hitting the slopes can save your life. Just as bicyclists do, skiers and snowboarders should get the helmet habit." (CPSC)

Every year about 50 Alaskans are hospitalized due to a snowboarding or skiing injury. About one in ten suffers a serious head injury. Head injuries are not only costly, but can be devastating emotionally, physically, and mentally. One hospitalization from a skiing injury in the Alaska Trauma Registry cost the individual almost \$30,000 for the hospital stay alone. The Harborview Medical Center Injury Prevention and Research Center reports that the average lifetime cost of severe head injury is \$4,500,000!